

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method of processing incoming emails, the method comprising:  
receiving an incoming email;  
determining whether the incoming email requires a response; and  
after determining that the incoming email requires a response, generating an auto  
reply email to the incoming email;  
wherein the incoming email is processed to determine characteristics of the auto  
reply email.
2. The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein generating an auto reply email  
comprises:  
separating the incoming email into a plurality of parts; the plurality of parts  
including a control information portion; and  
processing the control information portion to determine the characteristics of the  
auto reply email.
3. The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion  
comprises a region identifier and an application identifier.
4. The method, as recited in Claim 3, further comprising selecting a template for  
the auto reply email based on the region identifier and the application identifier.
5. The method, as recited in Claim 4, wherein the template is a web page linked  
to a customer feedback tool.
6. The method, as recited in Claim 4, wherein the template is a text message  
directing a customer to a customer feedback tool.
7. The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion  
comprises an identifier of a sent email, wherein the incoming email is a reply to the sent  
email.

8. The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion includes an auto reply email loop count.

9. The method, as recited in Claim 8, further comprising comparing the auto reply email loop count to a predetermined threshold value, and selectively sending the auto reply email based on a result of the comparison.

10. The method, as recited in Claim 8, wherein to determine the characteristics of the auto reply email comprises incrementing the auto reply email loop count.

11. The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion comprises a message header, a destination address, an origination address, and an auto reply email loop count.

12. The method, as recited in Claim 11, the destination address includes a sent email identifier and an application identifier.

13. The method, as recited in Claim 12, wherein the application identifier identifies one of an electronic billing application, a confirm order status application, and a marketing application.

14. The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein generating the auto reply email comprises:

separating the incoming email into a plurality of parts; the plurality of parts

including a message body portion;

processing the message body portion producing an extracted text portion;

choosing an auto reply email template; and

forming the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply email template.

15. The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein processing the message body portion comprises:

converting the message body portion into the extracted text portion in response to determining that the message body portion includes an HTML portion.

16. The method, as recited in Claim 15, wherein converting the message body portion comprises:

converting the HTML portion into a text only portion;  
removing blank lines from the text only portion; and  
truncating the text only portion.

17. The method, as recited in Claim 16, wherein the text only portion is truncated after determining that the text only portion size exceeds a predetermined limit that is determined according to a size of a web field.

18. The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein processing the message body portion comprises:

converting the message body into the extracted text portion.

19. The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein processing the message body portion comprises removing an attachment to the message body portion.

20. The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein forming the auto reply email includes placing the extracted text portion into a web field of the auto reply email template.

21. The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein the auto reply email template is a web page linked to the customer feedback tool.

22. The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein the auto reply email template is a text message directing a customer to the customer feedback tool.

23. The method, as recited in Claim 1, further comprising determining if the incoming email is one of an out-of-office reply, a notification of an incorrect address, an unsubscribe email, and a reply containing a customer inquiry that requires a response.

24. The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the incoming email is sent in response to a broadcast email sent to a plurality of customers, the broadcast email including a no-reply from address and one or more control identifiers.

25. The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the incoming email is sent in response to an email sent to a customer, the email sent to the customer including a no-reply from address and one or more control identifiers.

26. The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the auto reply email includes a next email form identifier from a customer feedback tool.

27. The method, as recited in Claim 1, further comprising:  
separating the incoming email into a plurality of parts; the plurality of parts  
including a control information portion and a message body portion;  
processing the control information portion to determine the characteristics of the  
auto reply email;  
processing the message body portion producing an extracted text portion;  
choosing an auto reply email template; and  
forming the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply  
email template.

28. The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the auto reply email is associated with a customer feedback tool.

29. An apparatus comprising:

an input port for receiving incoming emails addressed to a specified address;

a filter configured to filter the incoming emails to identify an incoming email requiring a response; and

an auto reply email tool configured to receive the incoming email requiring a response and to generate an auto reply email;

wherein the incoming email is processed to determine characteristics of the auto reply email.

30. The apparatus, as recited in Claim 29, wherein the specified address is a no-reply address.

31. The apparatus, as recited in Claim 29, wherein the auto reply email tool comprises:

a separator configured to split the incoming email into a plurality of parts; the plurality of parts including a control information portion and a message body portion;

a message body extractor configured to process the message body portion producing an extracted text portion; and

a generator configured to choose an auto reply email template based on the control information portion and to form the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply email template.

32. The apparatus, as recited in Claim 31, wherein the auto reply email template is a web page linked to a customer feedback tool.

33. The apparatus, as recited in Claim 31, wherein the auto reply email template is a text message directing a customer to a customer feedback tool.

34. The apparatus, as recited in Claim 31, wherein the control information portion comprises a region identifier and an application identifier.

35. The apparatus, as recited in Claim 34, further comprising selecting the auto reply email template based on the region identifier and the application identifier.

36. A system comprising:  
a customer feedback tool;  
an email auto reply email component configured to:  
    receive incoming email; and  
    generate an auto reply email to the incoming email;  
wherein the auto reply email links a sender of the incoming email to the customer feedback tool.

37. The system, as recited in Claim 36, wherein the email auto reply component comprises:

    an input port for receiving incoming emails addressed to a specified address;  
    a filter configured to filter the incoming emails to identify an incoming email requiring a response; and  
    an auto reply email generator configured to receive the incoming email requiring a response and to generate the auto reply email;  
wherein the incoming email is processed to determine characteristics of the auto reply email.

38. The system, as recited in Claim 37, wherein the specified address is a no-reply address.

39. The system, as recited in Claim 37, wherein the auto reply email generator comprises:

- a separator configured to split the incoming email into a plurality of parts; the plurality of parts including a control information portion and a message body portion;
- a message body extractor configured to process the message body portion producing an extracted text portion; and
- a message generator configured to choose an auto reply email template based on the control information portion and to form the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply email template.

40. The system, as recited in Claim 39, wherein the auto reply email template is a web page linked to the customer feedback tool.

41. The system, as recited in Claim 39, wherein the auto reply email template is a text message directing a customer to the customer feedback tool.

42. The system, as recited in Claim 39, wherein the control information portion comprises a region identifier and an application identifier.

43. The system, as recited in Claim 42, further comprising selecting the auto reply email template based on the region identifier and the application identifier.